

# Dismantling Theological Paradigms: A Reading of Selected Plays of Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw

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**Abstract:** Ibsen was introduced to the British society by Edmond Gosse but it was Bernard Shaw who championed Ibsen's ideas and introduced him to the British public. Although the two playwrights never met, Shaw's admiration for Ibsen is clear in the former's works and further buttressed in the three critical essays he wrote about Ibsen namely; *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, *Our Theatres in the Nineties*, and *The Preface*. Shaw's plays are therefore, greatly influenced by Ibsen's ideas and this is evident in the identical thematic concerns of both authors. They are studied here as non-conformists who challenged dogmatic religious mores of 19th century Europe. The objective of this study entitled "Dismantling Theological Paradigms: A Reading of Selected Plays of Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw" is to approach a larger comprehension of the religious perspectives and philosophies of Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw. The article combines the religious ideas and theological paradigms inherent in the plays of both authors and explores the hypocritical mechanisms of the clergy. In another sense, the study questions conventionality, unveils social and religious hypocrisies and attempts to disillusion the reader. This study, therefore, analyses the two authors as satirists of conventional religion and demonstrates that, for Ibsen and Shaw, conventional religion hinders man's progress and destroys man's freedom. In other words, the article looks at conventional religious practices as stumbling blocks on the road to self-fulfilment and self-realisation. The hypocritical and exploitative attitudes of Ibsen's clergymen and the life-denying philosophy of Christian Orthodoxy are the major issues that provoke the satires of both playwrights. All these are analysed here from a Marxist standpoint since their dramas tend towards representing how matters of marriage and religion are based on materialist tendencies. The Marxist's idea of material possession, being at the bases of all human ventures, is quite relevant to this article.

**Keywords:** Dismantle, Theological Paradigms, Conventional, Religious, Hypocritical, Freedom, Marxists

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## 1. Introduction

Although Ibsen and Shaw were each born at least a century ago, the authors come off as incredibly modern and relevant authors both in the prophetic significance of their thematic concerns and in the contemporary nature of the subjects they treat in their plays. One of such subjects which exert a profound influence on all societies and many of the world's peoples is religion. Referring to this, Barzilai Gad states in his *Law and Religion* that "throughout history, religion has proven to be the primary force for social progress, motivating individuals to develop spiritual qualities, and empowering them to sacrifice for their fellow human-beings and to contribute to the betterment of their communities" [12]. In their plays, Ibsen and Shaw seem to agree with Gad, but they

intimate that the perversion of religion has been a primary cause of social disintegration, intolerance, hatred, sexism, poverty, oppression and warfare down through the ages. According to the authors, conventional religion is no longer practical and is the cause of many of today's seemingly intractable problems, including corruption, hypocrisy and the misuse of religious authority. The objective of this article therefore is to study the authors as satirists of conventional religion and to investigate their concern with religious hypocrisy. For them, it is obvious that, if religion is to help meet the manifold challenges confronting the world community, it must be free of hypocrisy.

Shaw juxtaposes the Christian Orthodox religion and Shavian ideals such as Shavianism in a bid to expose the follies and weaknesses of conventional religion. The

religious perspectives of both Ibsen and Shaw seem to intimate that both writers are advocates of a self-satisfying, rather than a self-denying religion. In other words, Ibsen and Shaw are unanimous on the fact that any religion that does not fit the facts of life and lead to success is nothing but a sham. It is indeed clear to both authors that humanity cannot do without religion; yet, religion in its traditional form is unacceptable. The religion of the "life force" that Shaw preaches is, therefore, a kind of compromise between science and religion based on the notion of "morality without theology."

According to both authors, humanity has to grow from conventional religious practices to embrace new values that are concordant with human problems. It is this growth that Shaw refers to in the Preface to his *Man and Superman* as Creative Evolution. Creative evolution, as will be examined here, is virtually a philosophy of human growth. John Gassner in *Bernard Shaw and the Making of the Modern Mind* stipulates that "Shaw rejected the idea of a personal omnipotent God and accepted the idea of an imperfect God who drives experimentally, by means of his own imperfect creations, toward greater knowledge and power and complete intelligence" [14]. Such a concept of an imperfect deity for Shaw explains the existence of evil and suffering which are unexplainable in many other religious beliefs. According to John Ervine in *Bernard Shaw, His Life, Work and Friends*, the "Life Force" is an integral part of Shaw's theory of creative evolution, which he fully developed in the preface to *Man and Superman* [11]. Shaw proposes that mankind is progressing toward higher and higher forms of intellectual development.

According to Ibsen and Shaw, religion, in its conventional form, acts as a hindrance to human happiness and to the search for self-realisation and fulfilment. While Ibsen's condemnation of conventional religion is mostly in the hypocritical attitude of his clergy men, Shavian religious satire attacks mostly religious institutions that stand on the way of individual effort. Both writers are, however, unanimous on the fact that conventional religion relegates the woman to the background. Ibsen's clergy men in plays like *Ghosts* and *Pillars of Society* and the authorities of the church in Shaw's *Saint Joan* continuously look low on the woman and consider her inferior to the man. Havelock Ellis in the editorial preface to Ibsen's *The Pillars of Society*, and *Other Plays*, says: "It is the traditional morality of which the priesthoods everywhere are the chief and authorised exponents with which he (Ibsen) is concerned" [10]. Ibsen paints a very negative picture of the clergy men in his drama because he seems to see no relationship between their religion and behaviour.

Before we get into analysing the above mentioned view, it is important to note that Shaw's *Major Barbara* and *Saint Joan* are brilliant expositions of two conflicting philosophies of life, that is, Shavianism and Christian Orthodoxy, which have their roots in two conflicting religions. The two religions are basically the Shavian new scientific religion-Life Force that relegates God to the background of man's

actions, and the Christian Orthodox religion that sees God as all sufficient. The intention of Ibsen and Shaw, as demonstrated in this study, is to condemn or denounce the conventional aspects of the Christian religion that encourage social retrogression, rather than progression.

Commenting on the place of religious belief in human thought and action, Immanuel Kant in *Religion and Rational Theology* notes that, although religion is crucial to man's existence, the idea of a true religion has for long remained debatable [15]. It is probably because of this that Shaw's and Ibsen's views on religion are flexible enough to accept even the belief in immoral ideas as constituting true religion so long as such a religion is strongly held and leads to success. Christian Orthodoxy, on the other hand, continues to hang on creed and conventional morality even when these prove unproductive to society.

## 2. Religious Hypocrisy

The activities of the clergy men that Ibsen presents to us run contrary to their vocational call. They are easily identified with the secular than with the religious world. A case in point is Parson Molvik in Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* who is found mostly in public social gatherings than in religious grounds. Contrary to what one will expect from a pious person, Molvik spends his time drinking and getting drunk. He finds pleasure in drunkenness than in his religious duties. Pastor Manders in *Ghosts* is no exception. The Bible is expected to be the greatest companion to a Pastor but this is not the case with Molvik and Pastor Manders. They are presented as incompetent missionaries who do not master their vocation and find pleasure in secular activities than in religious issues.

In *Ghosts*, Pastor Manders himself says that he is the chairman of many organisations in the city where he resides. When Oswald carries out an incestuous act with Regine in *Ghosts*, Mrs Alving seeks advice from Pastor Manders who shamelessly declares that he is incompetent in handling such issues. Pastor Manders tells Mrs. Alving that: "I have no experience in such things...I wish I knew what to suggest. I don't feel competent to deal with a crisis of that sort" [2]. Incest is a social ill that is condemned in the *The Holy Bible* in the following words: "you shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father, or your mother, whether born at home or abroad" [18]. That Pastor Manders is ignorant of the Bible and incompetent to counsel his Christians on very sensitive religious issues is an indication that he is not the Pastor that he claims to be. Pastor Manders is, therefore, an epitome of the religious hypocrites that the Norwegian and Victorian societies harboured. Ibsen and Shaw are unanimous in their effort to stamp out such hypocritical practices that destroy the happiness of the society.

Equally, Ibsen's clergyman is seen as an exponent of conventional religious ideas. He is largely responsible for the plight of the woman in the Victorian society whose position has continuously been reduced to the kitchen and family. The

man of God is seen as a forerunner of the Biblical passage which states that "Wives submit to your husbands as to the lord for the husband is head of the family as Christ is the head of the Church. Now as also wives should submit to their husbands in everything" [20].

According to Pastor Manders, the woman should remain subordinate to the man forever. The woman's main occupation is limited to the family and care for the children. He forces Mrs. Alving back to her marital home when the latter attempts to run away from her matrimonial misery like Nora in *A Doll's House*. He tells Mrs. Alving that her attempts at running away constitute a betrayal of her duties as a wife and mother. The pastor misconstrues Mrs. Alving's attempts at running away as "rebellious" and "undisciplined". It is clear that the pastor's judgement on the woman is linked to the already-mentioned Biblical passage that subjects the woman to the whims and caprices of the man.

There is, no doubt that Ibsen is against such religious prescriptions and its promoters because they prevent the woman from establishing her real identity. Like Shaw does in *Saint Joan*, Ibsen's intention is to overthrow such conventional religious norms that no longer stand the test of time. Such laws, according to Ibsen and Shaw, hinder the woman's progress and happiness and prevent society from benefiting from her talents. The church is viewed by both authors as an instrument of the state that discriminates on the woman and refuses her to establish her identity. By abandoning marital homes, Nora and Mrs. Alving violate the religious law of "for better or for worse" but they are embodiments of Ibsen's view that religion should not be self-denying but self-giving. Shaw shares this view with Ibsen and both writers insist, as this study demonstrates, that it is wrong to continue to cling to such religious dogmas that do not serve the common man.

Similarly, it is ridiculous that Pastor Manders is unconcerned with the poor. The man of God shamelessly manifests his careless and neglectful attitude in the first act of *Ghosts* when he tells Regine that he cannot travel to the village because of bad weather. Pastor Manders has been so carried away by city distractions that he forgets completely that, as a religious leader, he is supposed to help the poor and encourage them. In spite of the rainfall, Regine is not discouraged as she states that "rainfall is a blessing to farmers". One would expect such encouraging words from the man of God but the situation is the reverse as Pastor Manders shamelessly says "we city folks never think of that" [2]. The pastor's indifference to the poor is seen as hypocritical and Ibsen castigates this in strong terms because it is against the vocation of a pastor. This situation is typical of most pastors and priests even in the Cameroonian context today where the poor are neglected in favour of the rich. Since the rich can provide enough financial support to the church and the pastors, the tendency is to give them (the rich) much attention than to the poor who can only pray. This brings to mind the Salvation Army camp of Major Barbara in Shaw's *Major Barbara*. The camp survives because of the riches of Andrew Undershaft whose money is first

considered as dirty by Major Barbara and the Christian religion she practices.

The question whether one should rely more on money than on prayers becomes very important. To avoid religious hypocrisy, the power and influence of money should be considered seriously before one decides to become a pastor or a priest. That Pastor Manders thinks of insuring an orphanage is an indication that he does not have faith in the God he claims to be serving. The fact that the pastor insures even his own private property is an indication that he has no trust in divine protection. In other words, the man of God believes more in the secular world of pomp than in divine protection. We realise from this that Pastor Manders's hypocritical nature cannot be denied. He is an exact opposite of what a true clergy man should be. By presenting his clergy man this way, Ibsen is certainly rebuking the religious hypocrisy that has eaten deep into the Norwegian society and even the world over.

Like Pastor Manders in *Ghosts*, Parson Rorlund in *Pillars of Society* is a religious hypocrite. Abandoned by her parents, Dina's last hope for solace and advice is Rorlund but the latter fails to offer the poor Dina any of these and is instead interested in marrying her. In addition to this, it is regrettable that Rorlund praises the capitalists in public, even when he is aware of the capitalist's devilish dealings. Rorlund is quite aware of the negative effects of "the new industrial development" that Consul Bernick brings into the community but, shamelessly, lauds Bernick's efforts [1]. The hypocritical and double-standard nature of all the clergy men mentioned above brings to mind the book of Matthew chapter 23 verses 27-28 in The Holy Bible which states that "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" [18]. This verse seems to be a direct response and warning to all those who present themselves as righteous people but whose attitudes leave a different impression.

One realises, therefore, that Pastor Manders is not different from Rorlund who is incapable of giving advice to an unfortunate girl abandoned by her parents. Being the man of God that he is, one would expect Rorlund to counsel Dina and encourage her spiritually but the reverse is true as the clergy man thinks only of himself. He neglects not only the moral obligation to counsel the girl but also the mental depression that Dina might suffer from the absence of her parents. Ibsen condemns such hypocritical acts and intends to correct all the "Parson Rorlunds" and "Pastor Manders's" of the society. The fact that Rorlund supports the capitalists, in spite of the negative consequences on other individuals, means that he is an accomplice to those who enrich and empower themselves at the expense of other individuals in the society. The church represented here by the clergy, thus, acts as a deterrent to the progress of the society.

### 3. Prostitution and Social Hypocrisy

A committed socialist, Shaw held the firm but controversial belief that prostitution is not the result of moral laxity on the part of women who sell their bodies. He maintained instead that the problem resulted from a political and economic system that allowed much of Britain's population to live in abject poverty. To win others over to his position, Shaw wrote *Mrs Warren's Profession*, which served as a sort of four-act argument. Written in 1894, the play is populated by hypocrites and like Ibsen in *Ghosts*, Shaw takes delight in satirising them. In his preface to the play, Shaw wrote that he wrote the play to "draw attention to the truth that prostitution is caused, not by female depravity and male licentiousness, but simply by underpaying, undervaluing and overworking women so shamefully that the poorest of them are forced to resort to prostitution to keep body and soul together" [5]. He argued that Mrs. Warren's defence of herself was valid, although it was not meant to be a justification of the vice in which she was involved.

In *Mrs Warren's Profession*, Shaw does not defend prostitution as a moral profession. Rather, the play's thrust is based on the notion that a society that allows masses of people to endure miserable lives filled with poverty is every bit as immoral as any particular vice. In his preface to this play, Shaw notes that "starvation, overwork, dirt, and disease are as anti-social as prostitution—that they are the vices and crimes of a nation, and not merely its misfortunes" [5]. In the play, this point of view is poignantly expressed by Mrs. Warren when she tries explaining to her daughter, Vivie, how she became a prostitute. She describes the fate of a half-sister who, in an attempt to follow the path of respectability, found the type of brutal factory job available to poor women. The sister, says Mrs. Warren, died of lead poisoning as a result.

Instead of working herself to death only to have someone else enjoy the profits of her labour, Mrs. Warren chooses to become part of what was known at that time as the White Slave Trade. She asks Vivie: "Do you think I did what I did because I liked it, or thought it right, or wouldn't have rather gone to college and been a lady if I'd had the chance?" [5]. Shaw strengthens his argument by portraying Mrs. Warren as an essentially decent person with many admirable qualities. She has a strong character and works hard to ensure her daughter could enjoy opportunities that were never within her reach. Because of Mrs. Warren's prostitution, Vivie is able to attend university and pursue a legitimate career.

When Vivie accuses her mother of trying to escape responsibility for her actions by blaming "circumstances", Mrs. Warren quickly sets her straight. "It's not work that any woman would do for pleasure," she explains [5]. The work, however, allows Mrs. Warren not only to survive, but also to thrive and pass on the benefits to Vivie. Vivie is offered a future much brighter than any that was ever available to her mother. Shaw would have successfully painted Mrs. Warren as a demon and this would have undoubtedly made this play more popular among the masses. It is, however, important to note that portraying her as evil would have undermined the

point he wants the play to make. As Shaw writes in the preface, "Nothing would please the sanctimonious British public more than to throw the whole guilt of Mrs Warren's profession on Mrs Warren herself" [5]. Presenting her, as he does, makes it more difficult for the audience to condemn Mrs. Warren as an abjectly immoral person while exposing them to the idea that society truly is at fault.

Shaw uses the character of Mrs. Warren to make another significant point as she defends herself against Vivie's castigation. It concerns the choices women in general are often forced to make and the hypocrisy of society in deeming one virtuous and the other immoral. Mrs. Warren contends that there is no real difference between a woman who prostitutes herself and one who marries not for love but to secure a safe financial future for herself. Mrs. Warren rails at the injustice, saying "as if a marriage ceremony could make any difference in the right or wrong of the thing!" Then, she utters what is a crucial line: "Oh, the hypocrisy of the world makes me sick!" [5]. This statement is important because it highlights what seems to be an underlying theme.

The Reverend Samuel Gardner is among several characters who reveal themselves to be hypocrites. These are people who put on a pious or upstanding face in public and then act much differently in private. This is demonstrated when the clergyman is asked to put up Mr. Praed for the night and he hesitates, saying his role as reverend requires him to make certain that anyone staying at his house must have the requisite social standing. The truth is that the reverend is anything but a pillar of morality. He gets drunk. Instead of writing the sermons he gives on Sundays, as he pretends to, he buys them. In addition, it is disclosed that he made use of Mrs. Warren's professional services when both were younger. In fact, Reverend Gardner might even be Vivie's father. His son is hardly better. Though charming, Frank seeks to secure his place in the world by marrying a wealthy woman. He ridicules his father, but continues to depend upon him for an allowance, which is another kind of hypocrisy. Towards the end of the play, having learned the truth about Mrs. Warren, Frank states that "... (I) can't bring myself to touch the old woman's money now" [5]. We notice hypocrisy here because only a few moments earlier, he had proudly displayed to Vivie the gold coins he obtained, not through honest work but by gambling, which, in itself, is a vice.

Although Ibsen does not really focus on prostitution in any of his plays as Shaw does in *Mrs Warren's Profession*, the former also condemns social hypocrisy, especially through the religious leaders in his plays like *Ghosts* and *The Pillars of Society*. Contrary to what some people may think, these two authors do not intend to put the blame of human weakness and, sometimes, wickedness on the society. Rather, this study postulates that Ibsen and Shaw want society to take its responsibilities properly and provide individuals with the right choices to make. Prostitution is not an exemplary profession and I am sure that Shaw thinks the same but the point is that it seems to be the only better choice that society offers Mrs Warren.

The people of God we meet in the play are as bad and

hypocritical as those we meet in Ibsen's *Ghosts* and *Pillars of Society* and if focus is shifted on the individuals alone, Mrs Warren could avoid prostitution but there will still be other Mrs. Warrens. In short, the activity is bad but the cause is a worse enemy than the perpetrator. Vivie's judgement of her mother is as lopsided as Helmer's judgement of Nora when the debt secret is revealed in *A Doll's House*. The Judgement is also as lopsided as Barbara's judgement of her father's business in Shaw's *Major Barbara* but one can easily understand these heroines of both authors whose psychologies and sense of judgements are always in a state of growth or becoming.

## 4. Religious Conflicts

As a member of the Fabian society, forerunner and father of Shavianism, Shaw is bound to be unorthodox and unconventional in his thoughts and deeds. It, therefore, follows that, Shavianism as a philosophy of life and Christian religious orthodoxy are opposites. That is to say they are two similar but opposite schools of thought.

Shaw's *Major Barbara* and *Saint Joan* are brilliant expositions of two conflicting philosophies of life, Shavianism and Christian orthodoxy, which have their roots in two conflicting religions. The two religions are basically the Shavian new scientific religion- The Life Force that relegates God to the background of man's actions, and the Christian Orthodox religion that sees God as all sufficient. Through issues like charity, soul-saving, poverty and heresy, Shaw juxtaposes Shavianism and the Christian orthodox religion in a bid to project Shavianism as a more realistic philosophy of life than the Christian orthodox religion.

After detecting that the Christian religion of his time was sterile, Shaw decided, like Ibsen, to write plays that would not only make audiences and readers re-examine their consciences and overhaul their conventional beliefs, but which would convert the world to his opinions. One of such opinions is the idea of a true religion expressed in his religious plays such as *Major Barbara* and *Saint Joan*. This idea goes contrary to what the Christian orthodox believers of his time held. The rivalry between The Life Force and the Christian religion clearly exposes Shaw's intention to demolish the aspects of the Christian religion that impede development and progress and force human beings to behave like robots.

### 4.1. Money or Poverty

*Major Barbara* is the dramatisation of this religious conflict. *Major Barbara* represents the conventional or Christian point of view and Andrew Undershaft is Shaw's representative of The Life Force. Towards the end of Act 1 of the play, these characters assert their opposing values:

UNDERSHAFT: Well, I will make a bargain with you. If I go to see you. Tomorrow in your salvation shelter, will you come the day after to see me in my canon works?

BARBARA: Take care. It may end in your giving up the cannons for the sake of the Salvation Army.

UNDERSHAFT: Are you sure it will not end in your giving up the Salvation Army for the sake of the cannons?

BARBARA: I will take my chance of that.

UNDERSHAFT: And I will take my chance of the other. [4].

The above exchange exposes the religious conflict between Undershaft and his daughter, Barbara. Both father and daughter are confident of their power to convert the other. Undershaft is bent on converting everyone to his religion of money and gunpowder. To Andrew Undershaft, the millionaire manufacturer of torpedoes and aerial battleships, any religion that does not fit the facts of life must be scraped out and replaced with a religion that does. Thus, the Christian religion has failed because it is essentially life-denying. It is through Undershaft that Shaw advocates his beliefs that poverty is the worst crime and that only a successful socialist can build a perfect society. Undershaft seems to argue for Shaw that religion must be life giving. This is one of the main ideas on which the religious conflict in *Major Barbara* is based. As an embodiment of The Life Force, Undershaft criticises the Christian virtue of humility principally because of its endorsement of poverty. As an agent of The Life Force, Undershaft wages a war against poverty and all religions that embrace it.

On the other hand, *Major Barbara*, the ultimate voice of the Christian faith, and her fellow members of the West Ham Salvation Army Shelter work from the premise that faith and spiritual ideals are the inevitable prerequisites for salvation. Hence, they discard Undershaft's views as the selfish pagan views of a materialist. It is not unconnected with their scorn of Undershaft that they attribute various titles and tags to his person. He is variously described as "The Prince of Darkness", "Dionysos", "Machiavelli", "The Devil's Disciple" and even "Nietzsche". As a representative of The Life Force, Undershaft defends the material aspects of life. He ridicules the Christian ethics of humility and poverty and considers the Christian religion an obstacle and an enemy to progress. To him, as long as the mass of converts, Christians and Christian leaders do believe like Peter Shirley that the rich are evil and the poor good, poverty shall never be eradicated.

### 4.2. Soul-Saving

Equally, Undershaft and *Major Barbara* differ remarkably in the idea of soul-saving. Undershaft argues that poverty stands on the way of decent politics, a decent life and even a decent religion. It is in this respect that he feels that *Major Barbara*'s idea of soul-saving is misdirected. He goes ahead to attempt to rebuild her convictions by altering her ideas about the relationship between the physical well-being and spiritual salvation. As the representative of The Life Force religion, Undershaft views soul-saving basically in terms of physical well-being while Barbara considers it in purely spiritual terms. For Barbara, the primary business of life is spiritual soul-saving; that men may be hungry or starving is merely a troublesome fact of secondary importance. Undershaft is involved in soul-saving but soul-saving for him

means something quite different. It is in this light that when referring to his workmen at Perivale St. Andrew's, he shocks Barbara when he says, "I save their souls just as I saved yours" [4].

The ideological conflict that surrounds the term "soul-saving" is quite ambiguous. Major Barbara is surprised because she understands the term "soul-saving" in quite a different sense. In Christian theology, it is closely related to leading souls to heaven. Since The Life Force religion has no place as heaven, the term soul-saving is closely related to material well-being. This ideological conflict is exemplified in the following dialogue between Major Barbara and her father, Andrew Undershaft.

BARBARA: (revolted) You saved my soul! What do you mean?

UNDERSHAFT: I fed you and cloth you and housed you. I took care that you should have money enough to live handsomely –more than enough; so that you could be wasteful, careless, generous. That saved your soul from the seven deadly sins.

BARBARA: (bewildered) The seven deadly sins!

UNDERSHAFT: Yes, the deadly seven...food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability and children. Nothing can lift those seven millstones from man's neck but money; and the spirit cannot soar until the millstones are lifted. [4].

Undershaft's economic arguments for soul-saving are so convincing that the reader seems to see more reason in it. Here, Undershaft echoes Shaw's stand that religion must be life-giving and not life-denying. Shaw's intention is to cancel the Christian idea that soul saving means leading souls to heaven. According to him, a person's soul is saved when the person is given food, shelter and clothes. As this study illustrates, Shaw's idea is that a soul that is hungry cannot be saved if not fed. He, therefore, deviates from the conventional religious stand on soul-saving and argues that soul-saving means providing the basic necessities to the souls that need them.

The picture of the West Ham Salvation Army Shelter and that of Perivale St. Andrews are representatives of the distinctive manner by which the theological protagonists save souls. The house of the factory workers in Perivale St. Andrews is clean and comfortable; the workers themselves are happy and well fed. In Perivale St. Andrews, there is no sign of poverty, an indication that "Undershaftianity" is an embodiment of a materialistic utopia or is exclusively centred on material well-being which Undershaft terms soul-saving. After the visit to the West Ham Salvation Army Shelter, Undershaft makes this remark to his daughter, Major Barbara, "In your shelter, I saw poverty, misery, cold and hunger. You gave them bread and treacle dreams of heavens. I give from thirty shillings a week to twelve thousand a year. They find their own dreams, but I look after the drainage" [4]. In comparing his methods to those of Major Barbara, Undershaft strongly believes that people's bodies are to be saved first and then attention can be given to their spiritual concerns. As already mentioned, Shaw ridicules the misery that surrounds the West Ham Salvation Army Shelter and

seeks to convince the society that material well-being is of utmost importance while spiritual survival is of secondary importance. According to Shaw, it is clearly impossible to exact moral, intellectual, and aesthetic cultivation from people whom societal circumstances like poverty, money-grubbing, war, disease and the vulgarity of mass communications pervert to a subhuman level. Monstrous institutions, he repeatedly emphasised, make monsters of quite ordinary men.

#### 4.3. *Charity: Solution or Problem*

Another major area of ideological conflict in Major Barbara is the Christian virtue of charity, which Undershaft challenges. In *A Guide to the Plays of Bernard Shaw*, C. B. Purdom quotes Shaw as having stated that, "I regard certain doctrines of the Christian religion as understood in English today with abhorrence. I write plays with deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinion in these matters" [16]. In Major Barbara, Shaw demonstrates through Undershaft that charity is merely a cheap exchange for social justice. He considers charity as bribes and as attempts to encourage poverty because the poor Christians are made to forget their miseries and the injustices inflicted on them and look on to an imaginary heaven for a better and prosperous life. To Shaw, these people should rather be encouraged to stand up and demand their rights.

The Life Force religion that Undershaft brandishes is directly opposed to Barbara's Christian religion with respect to charity. Whereas, the Salvation Army emphasises that salvation exists, in the next world and that the loss of this world means nothing, The Life Force believes in the betterment of mankind on earth and knows nothing as a "next world". Shaw wants to eradicate poverty and the injustice of man's immediate world. According to Undershaft's religion of reason, "It is cheap work converting starving men with a Bible in one hand and a slice of bread in the other" [4]. Undershaft presents the Shavian vision of charity as a cheap substitute for social justice because, as he claims, "I will undertake to convert West Ham to Mohammedanism on the same terms" [4]. Shaw's contempt for charity brings to mind Oscar Wilde's *The Soul of Man under Socialism* in which the author condemns the whole notion of charity and kindness. Wilde questions that "Why should they be grateful for the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table [21]?"

Rummy Mitchens, "a commonplace old bundle of poverty and hard-worm humanity" and Snobby Price, a man "capable of anything in reason except honesty or altruistic considerations of any kind" are used to illustrate the limitations of charity [4]. The principle on which the Salvation Army Shelter works is simple; man sins, confesses his crimes and debaucheries at public meeting and purged of his guilt by his confession, he is now saved. He is kept in the Salvation Army Shelter for spiritual or religious meditations and to be further schooled or educated in spiritual life. While there, he is fed. Shaw demonstrates that the result is that pretensions to contrition cannot be distinguished from sincere confessions. Hence, those desperately in need of survival are

bound to confess sins that they never committed in a bid to survive at the expense of the Salvation Army. Snobby Price and Rummy Mitchens are experts in this game of survival and Shaw demonstrates that poverty defeats its own masses. The Army's goals are opposed to its achievements. The Army, ironically, works to prevent riots, to fend off revolutions and to consolidate the position and powers of the capitalists.

Furthermore, Shaw portrays the Salvation Army as feeding and sheltering people in return for dishonesty of the spirit; rotten bargain wherever it is made. In her article, "Sainthood for Millionaires", Barbara Bellow Watson in *A Shavian Guide to the Intelligent Woman* seems to echo the Shavian view of the Salvation Army that conventional missionaries are naïve and short sighted [20]. Talking about them, she says Barbara is as naïve as the missionaries in *Passage to India* who cannot realise that they get more converts when there is famine. She reaffirms that "Old Mr. Graysford and Young Mr. Sorley made converts during a famine, because they distributed food, but when times improved, they were naturally left alone again, and though surprised and aggrieved each time, this happened they never learnt wisdom" [20]. Like Old Mr. Graysford and Young Mr. Sorley, Major Barbara is unable to realise that her converts Rummy Mitchens and Snobby Price are Christians simply because they are in dire need. Hence, rather than enhance honesty, their charitable activities breed dishonesty. This is basically what Shaw castigates in strong terms. This weakness also goes to support the Shavian point of view that, it is a mockery to preach religion to a soul whose body is beset by poverty. It is in the above light that Shaw considers poverty as a deadly sin. Similarly, Undershaft wants the audience to consider that religion is not a mockery in *Perivale St. Andrews* where he has set up a little Island of private enterprise.

Lord Samuel seems to buy Shaw's view point about charity. He says charity deals with the symptoms instead of the causes. This means that charity, at first, might help alleviate the problems of people whose trouble had other causes. But, before long, charity becomes the cause of the problems and alleviates none of them. It is in this light that Shaw disagrees with the Christian endorsement of charity. The example of Snobby Price and Rummy Mitchens above is a clear indication that when help is given to those whose problems are of their own making, one can only reinforce the kind of behaviour that produced the problems. Seemingly, Shaw is not completely against the whole idea of charity. He even says, every genuinely benevolent person loathes almsgiving and mendacity. Shaw's major argument here is that unless one is sure that the one for whom he feels a desire to help deserves that help and truly desires that help, it is wrong to give it. In other words, Shaw argues that when charity means catering for the people's faults, whims, complaints, diseases, perversions, and defects, it is hatred not love.

#### 4.4. *Materialism Versus Spiritualism*

The glorification of self-defence or self-preservation and the hatred for poverty and charity seem to reduce Major Barbara to a lecture on wealth and materialism. Undershaft's

gospel of "money and gunpowder" is likely to mislead most readers into thinking that The Life Force religion that Shaw preaches is pure materialism at the expense of spiritualism. The following dialogue between Undershaft and Cusins shows that Undershaft's religion is not void of spiritual virtues:

CUSINS: Excuse me: is there any place in your religion for honour, justice, truth, love, mercy and so forth?

UNDERSHAFT: Yes: they are the graces and luxuries of a rich, strong, and safe life.

CUSINS: Suppose one is forced to choose between them and money or gunpowder?

UNDERSHAFT: Choose money and gunpowder; for without enough of both you cannot afford the others.

CUSINS: That is your religion?

UNDERSHAFT: Yes. [4].

We realise from the dialogue that Shaw's religion, as this study postulates, is not a complete hatred for religious virtues as honour, justice, truth, love and mercy. Rather, Undershaft claims that such virtues, though of secondary importance, exist in his religion. The implication of Undershaft's statement is that these virtues can only come from a man whose material well-being is secured. A man who has nothing cannot offer anything. This suggests that his religion has a place for virtuous acts but not in the same way as Major Barbara's.

Major Barbara seems to convey the impression that what humanity needs is not more of Christian religion or more morality but more money; that the evil in human society is not sin but poverty. This is why Shaw presents the Salvation Army as having fallen under the brute money power of Undershaft. Most readers and critics would argue that the whole play is concerned with materialism. Rose Abdelnour Zimbardo in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Major Barbara* attributes the play to money. He states that, "the play may be read as a thesis, a proof that munitions-making is the way to be saved; and this is, in fact, one of the bases of the many witty debates" [23]. A careful analysis of Major Barbara, however, shows that The Life Force religion that Shaw preaches is just as holy, as sane and as sacred as the Christian religion that Major Barbara upholds.

One realises that Major Barbara focuses on an idealistic heiress who joins the Salvation Army, hoping to help the poor by saving their souls. She rejects the capitalism of her father, the arms manufacturer Undershaft, until she visits the village in which his contented workers lead happy lives and comes to recognise the importance of financial stability to spiritual and social growth. "I am a Millionaire," explains Undershaft when his daughter offers to save his soul. "That is my religion." Major Barbara comes to see that people desperate for bread are not in a position to make fine distinctions about theology. Spiritual values, asserts Shaw in Major Barbara, "do not and cannot exist for hungry, roofless and naked people. Any religion that puts spiritual values before physical necessities is what Marx meant by opium and Nietzsche called a slave morality" [4].

#### 4.5. Identity/Family Crises

It is necessary to observe that, in *Major Barbara*, Shaw focuses on the development of identity in his lead character, Barbara Undershaft. Although Barbara has a strong sense of self at the beginning of the play, Shaw shows that her identity is not fixed and simple but fluid and complex. Her identity is composed of many factors that, initially, seem at odds. She is the daughter of wealthy parents whose lifestyles she rejects. Instead she chooses to work for the Salvation Army, accepting the tiny sum of a pound a week as salary. While her allegiance at the play's outset lies almost wholly with the Army, Barbara comes to realise that her family may enable her to better perform the work of God. This realisation brings her closer to God, her parents and family and, ultimately, to a true concept of her identity within the world in which the play is set.

From the beginning of the play, Barbara has, in essence, three parents: Lady Britomart, Andrew Undershaft, and her heavenly Father, God, whom she serves through her work in the Salvation Army. Act one establishes the positions of these three parents in Barbara's life. As the play begins, the audience discovers that Barbara has been entirely brought up by her mother and does not even know her biological father. Although her mother has raised her, it soon becomes clear that Barbara has rejected Lady Britomart's way of life. Before Barbara even walks on stage, her mother expresses disappointment in the path Barbara has taken: "I thought Barbara was going to make the most brilliant career of all.... And what does she do? Joins the Salvation Army; discharges her maid; lives on a pound a week; and walks in one evening with a professor of Greek whom she has picked up in the street" [4].

Barbara has clearly forsaken the opulence of her mother's life as well as Britomart's idea of an appropriate career for a respectable society woman. Yet, there is another way to see Barbara's relationship with her mother. As feminist critic J. Ellen Gainor remarks in her book *Shaw's Daughters: Dramatic and Narrative Constructions of Gender*, "The first half of the play... stresses Barbara's maternal resemblance, which Shaw notes in several stage directions as well as in a wonderfully comic speech by her mother" [13]. The speech Gainor referred to is that in which Lady Britomart complains about Barbara's "propensity to have her own way and order people about" and adds, "I'm sure I don't know where she picks it up," when it is, in fact, obvious that Barbara's behaviour resembles that of no one so much as Lady Britomart herself. In addition, while Barbara has rejected the luxury of her mother's lifestyle, she continues to live in her mother's house; her autonomy and austere lifestyle are supported by a safety net in the form of her mother's wealth. In spite of her verbal declarations of independence, Barbara is reliant on her mother's way of life and still very much Lady Britomart's daughter.

Barbara's decision to go her own way against her family announces the religious conflict that is later going to pit her against her own father who is the leader of the family. Her

decision to carve out her own religious perspective and the eventual conflict with her family is reminiscent of Nora's decision in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* [3]. Like Major Barbara, Nora rejects her family, collides with her husband and society and refuses the religion that would confine her to the whims and caprices of her husband. It is, however, interesting to observe that, unlike Major Barbara who has a strong sense of purpose and will at the beginning of the play, Ibsen's *A Doll's House* presents Nora at the beginning of the play as a weak conventional woman who accepts the morality and religion of her day without questioning. Nevertheless, she grows as the play evolves and is transformed into a woman of principle and strong will like the Major Barbara we meet at the beginning of Shaw's play.

Undershaft's initial relationship with Barbara is also established in the first act. Barbara's name is Undershaft, and she has been raised on her father's fortune (though her determination to live on "a pound a week" symbolically rejects that wealth). But in his introduction to the critical collection *George Bernard Shaw's Major Barbara*, Harold Bloom points out that in the course of their initial discussion, Barbara and Undershaft are "[bonded] against the mother, as each stands for... religion as the Life force" [8]. The two also agree on the motto "blood and fire" - although there is considerable difference in the meaning each takes from the phrase.

At the end of Act One, when Barbara and Undershaft each agree to visit the other's place of work, the bond between father and daughter is again emphasised. After years of absence from their lives, Undershaft arrives and, while not completely winning them over, immediately wins the attentions of his daughters. When Lady Britomart complains about a father who "steals [the children's] affection away from [the mother]," Shaw establishes a tension between the paternal and maternal, the masculine and feminine forces in Barbara's life. Gainor saw Barbara as the product of both parents, embracing the masculine as well as the feminine in her work in the Salvation Army. As Gainor pointed out, "the Army's essential function is more 'feminine': nurturing and concerned with the personal, while its structure is 'masculine': an army with hierarchies of power and financial concerns" [13].

In spite of the tension between masculine and feminine, the first act presents Barbara as primarily a child of God. It is for her "heavenly Father" that Barbara has abandoned her father's money and her mother's concept of a "brilliant career" and chosen to do the work of God. When Lady Britomart tells Undershaft that Barbara "has no father to advise her," Barbara replies, "Oh yes she has. There are no orphans in the Salvation Army." God the Father has become Barbara's parent as well as the center of her work. Even Barbara's name and clothes reflect her total absorption into the world of this father. She is no longer Barbara Undershaft but Major Barbara. She wears the uniform of the Salvation Army. Despite the resemblance she bears to her father and mother, Barbara sees her identity as fixed. She is the child of God. God's work (as represented by the Army's mission) is



her work. Barbara sees no compromise in this; her work with the Army is the ultimate expression of her devotion to God.

In the second act, Shaw shows Barbara Undershaft as Major Barbara, Salvationist and child of God. Although this scene at the shelter shows Barbara in her element, doing the work of her heavenly father, it is also at this point in the play that Undershaft begins to stake his claim on her. In his discussion with Cusins, he reveals that he loves Barbara, revealing his paternal emotions for her. Undershaft identifies Barbara with himself. When Cusins says that "Barbara is quite original in her own religion," Undershaft answers, "Barbara Undershaft would be... it is the Undershaft inheritance." He then goes on to say "I shall hand on my torch to my daughter" [4]. As Gainor appraised, "The father sees in the daughter an image of himself and intends to develop her capacity to carry on his public functions, as well as convert her to a form of Undershaft philosophy" [13]. Undershaft sees himself as Barbara's true father. Bernard F. Dukore points out in his book, *Bernard Shaw: Playwright*, "Symbolically as well as literally, Undershaft sires Barbara" [9]. As Barbara's father, Undershaft sees her identity in him and wants her to do his work. Later, Barbara sees that being the daughter of Undershaft is indeed a part of her identity. She also realises that being his daughter enables her to better perform her religious duties.

It is worth noting that in Act Two, Barbara still sees Undershaft as the man in opposition to her true father, a man whose business negatively affects her real work. In support of this, Shaw does suggest that Undershaft is the opposite of God. Throughout Major Barbara, Undershaft is referred to as the Devil, the Prince of Darkness and Mephistopheles. And it is in the second act that Barbara's earthly father reveals the hypocrisy of the Salvation Army. In essence, Undershaft buys the Salvation Army, and Barbara sees her identity as a child of God destroyed. She expresses that loss of identity in the symbolic action of pinning her Salvation Army brooch on Undershaft's collar. In the third act, she exchanges her uniform for ordinary clothes.

Barbara later cries out, "My God: why hast thou forsaken me?" In addition to losing God and the Salvation Army, she has also lost her work. "I'm like you now," she says to Peter Shirley. "Cleaned out, and lost my job." She later expresses the importance of this loss: "I stood on the rock eternal; and without a word of warning it reeled and crumbled under me. I was safe with an infinite wisdom watching me... and in a moment... I stood alone." The identity she saw as permanent seems to be gone altogether [4].

It is in the third act that Barbara begins to synthesise a new identity out of the fractured parts of her character. At first, when Barbara prepares to leave for Undershaft's factories and model town, the gulf she sees between God and Undershaft is emphasised when she describes her sense of Undershaft's work: "I have always thought of it as a sort of pit where lost creatures with blackened faces stirred up smoky fires and were driven and tormented by my father." Clearly, she is describing the traditional Christian imagery of hell with her father as the Devil. But Undershaft is not the

devil, and it is in this act that she begins to accept him as a parent. When he tells her, "You have learnt something. That always feels at first as if you lost something." This statement shows Undershaft in an understanding, fatherly role. On her part, Barbara begins to see that her father's work may do some good and that she may be able to learn from him.

Equally, Undershaft tells her here that he saved her soul from the seven deadly sins: "Food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability, and children." It is only because of Undershaft, who has provided for Barbara's physical needs her entire life, that Barbara had the means to be able to seek and serve God. Her acceptance of Undershaft as her father is emphasised when, after Cusins decides to succeed her father, Barbara reveals that, had he not, she would have married the man who did. As Dukore pointed out, "Barbara, marrying Cusins, becomes (since Adolphus takes his new father's name) Mrs. Andrew Undershaft [9]." Since Undershaft's successor must take his name, Barbara would have become Mrs. Andrew Undershaft regardless of who became her father's heir. Bloom, taking a Freudian point of view, saw Barbara's acceptance of her father as symbolically incestuous and refers to the pair's "dance of repressed psychosexual courtship." It seems more accurate, however, to see her as becoming fully her father's daughter, retaining, even in marriage, her father's name. In addition, this name is also her mother's, which places her even more strongly with both of her earthly parents.

Despite her disillusionment with the Salvation Army (and her "deal with the devil" in becoming Undershaft's heir), Barbara remains her heavenly Father's daughter as well; she has merely exchanged her idealistic view of God's work for one more realistic. She recognises that poverty is in itself an evil, but her concern is still for saving souls, though no longer "weak souls in starved bodies. My father shall never throw it in my teeth again that my converts were bribed with bread." She will continue to do the work of God but on different terms: "Let God's work be done for its own sake" [4].

In addition to accepting both Undershaft and God as fathers, in the final scene Barbara turns again to her mother. "After all," she says, "my dear old mother has more sense than any of you" [4]. Although Barbara contrasts her mother's desire for "the houses and the kitchen ranges and the linen and the china," of Perivale St. Andrews with her own focus on "all the human souls to be saved," she still accepts her place as her mother's daughter [4]. At the end of the play, Shaw describes her cry, "Mamma! Mamma! I want Mamma," as childlike, and describes Barbara as "[clutching] like a baby at her mother's skirt" [4]. Gainor viewed the reversion of Barbara to a childlike state as her acceptance of her role as a woman in her society. According to Gainor, women at this time "must be reinscribed within the feminine realm to rationalise or confirm their status." She goes on to say, "As Victorian culture associated the child with the feminine, a display of childish behaviour affirms the gender of the daughter" [13]. So Gainor sees Barbara's identity reverting to an earlier association with her mother, thus establishing her femininity and subservient place in society.

There is, however, another way to view Barbara's childlike behaviour in the final scene. As John A. Bertoloni wrote in his book *The Playwrighting Self of Bernard Shaw*, "Barbara herself is mad with delight for the idea of conversion, especially conversion as a cleansing away of the old self" [7]. What Barbara experiences in the last scene can also be seen as "self-renewal through childlike behavior." Although the final scene, certainly, does identify Barbara as her mother's daughter, it also can be seen as indicative of a rebirth. Barbara has become a new person with a new identity which is a combination of all facets of her character.

Barbara's new identity, however, is not solely with mother, father, or God. She has synthesised all three of these influences; she encompasses the masculine, the feminine, the spiritual. Similarly, her work is now also a synthesis, the domestic aspect of her marriage reflecting her mother's influence, her new understanding of the Undershaft business reflecting her father's, her desire to save souls reflecting God's. All are integrated to create a new sense of work, a new sense of family, and a new way of life. Barbara's character loses its fragmentary nature, and she becomes her true self.

#### **4.6. Individualism Versus Christian Orthodoxy in Saint Joan**

The Life Force is a programme for world betterment through individualism or individual efforts. Although materialistic and selfish in outlook, it is selfless as any religion one might think of. It glorifies individual efforts towards improvement as conveyed in Shaw's constant use of the phrase "individual will". His individual will is synonymous with determination. It is opposed to the ruthless will to power propounded by Nietzsche or the doctrine of "survival of the fittest" embodied in the Darwinian Theory.

Shaw's individualism is opposed to self-aggrandizement; it goes beyond ordinary selfishness. He makes this very clear in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* when he states that, "we are all members one of another, and though the strongest man is he who stands alone, the man who is standing alone for his own sake solely is literally an idiot" [17]. His heroes and heroines, therefore, often stand alone and struggle alone against all odds. But, they fight not only for themselves but also for their society or for mankind. They possess the quality of the epic hero in that they, single-handedly, fight to save their fellow men. Both Ibsen and Shaw are unanimous on the idea of the individual fighting for the society.

Ibsen and Shaw's *The Life Force* despise ruthless individualism and embrace evolution (human progress) but not strictly in the Darwinian sense. Unlike Darwin to whom evolution seems to be synonymous with moral retrogression, to Ibsen and Shaw, revolution is synonymous with moral progress. Unlike Darwin's theory where individualism is associated with selfishness, the individualism of Ibsen and Shaw is closely associated with selflessness and that is why Shaw further states in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* that "There is no hope for individualism for egotism. When a man is at last brought face to face with himself by a brave individualism, but with a species, and knows that to save

himself, he must save the race" [17].

Similarly, Shaw's deviation from convention in *Saint Joan* results in a very serious ideological conflict that further emphasises Shaw's projection of the individual against institutions. Joan, the heroine of *Saint Joan*, puts her private judgement above the constituted authority of the church. She believes in her voices and visions. The church militants consider all these unorthodox and heretical. It is important to note that in the medieval period, it was assumed that no ordinary Christian could receive revelations from God for if such were to be, they were to be channelled through church hierarchy. Joan's claims to revelations from God make her a heretic by medieval standards. She is thus going to be burnt at the stakes according to medieval prescriptions. Shaw does not only question the Christian Orthodox ideas of his time but tries to uncover and bring to the limelight all the truths that lie beneath conventions.

Christian Orthodox religion holds that the fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom. But to Shaw, wisdom begins when one starts questioning Orthodoxy. A. C. Ward in *Bernard Shaw* highlights this idea when he notes that, "to Shaw, the practice of questioning orthodox and "accepted" standards was at once the beginning of wisdom and beginning of goodness" [19]. In *Saint Joan*, Shaw questions Orthodoxy and dismisses the dogged, dogmatic and unconventional Christian Orthodox beliefs and doctrines of the nineteenth century. Rodelle Weintraub in *Fabian Feminist: Bernard Shaw and Woman* quotes Shaw's explanation of his stand in his opening statement to the 1909 parliamentary committee on censorship as follows:

I am not an ordinary playwright in general practice. I am a specialist in immoral and heretical plays. My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to consider its morals. In particular, I regard much current immorality as to economic and social relations as disastrously wrong; and I regard certain doctrines of the Christian religion as understood in England today with abhorrence. I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinion in these matters. [22].

By choosing Barbara and Joan as his heroines, Shaw wishes to drive home the point that what a man can do, a woman can also do and, sometimes, even better. Both Ibsen and Shaw believe strongly in this and they prove it in *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*, and in *Major Barbara* and *Saint Joan* respectively. Apart from choosing Barbara in *Major Barbara* as the only person suitable to lead the Salvation Army, Shaw presents Joan in *Saint Joan* as the only one suitable to free the French from the English, crown the dauphin of Rheims Cathedral, and raise the siege of Orleans. Joan's unconventionality is not only seen through her dressings and attitudes but also in her belief that her mission on earth comes directly from God.

Joan believes more in her voices, her visions and private judgment than in the constituted authority of the church. Joan's ideas collide with those of the Archbishop who stands for rigid religious beliefs that question all miracles or special powers that might undermine the church in some way. Shaw believes

that the church and the state fear any voice of truth that might undermine them. Consequently, they conspire to crush these threatening elements. The Bishop and the Earl of Warwick have no real malice towards Joan. However, they condemn her because she is seen as a supreme threat to the systems they represent. Joan is well equipped with the qualities that would assert her individuality and becomes an epitome of the protestant who prefers to believe in her own conscience than in the church's authority. This is why the church could only attribute her miracles to witchcraft and heresy.

Archbishop Peter Cauchon, for instance, does not dispute the fact that Joan has supernatural powers; rather, he attributes the powers to the devil. He says, the devil is employing Joan to strike at the very bases of the church and that Joan is diabolically inspired [6]. As a church official, he explains Joan's crimes in three dimensions. Joan, he says, totally ignores the church, she presumes to bring messages directly from God; she claims that, she and not the church would crown Charles. All these actions are performed without consulting the church and there is bound to be conflict. To act as if she were the church is to Cauchon heresy, which must be "stamped out, burnt out" [6]. Cauchon questions what will happen to the church if all individuals listen to their consciences rather than to the church. This rhetorical question exposes the danger Joan poses to the interest of the church.

Joan's views and activities, especially her claims to direct interaction with the spirit world, represent the protest of the individual soul against the interference of priests or church officials, between the private man and his God. Her nationalistic ideas are connected with her religious heresy. Her slogan "France for the French, England for the English, Italy for the Italians, Spain for the Spanish, and so forth" is contrary to the state of religious affairs in the medieval period [6]. If the Maid has her way, then the common people will begin to pay their allegiance to nations rather than yield to the universal church. Once allegiance is split, then, the church loses much of its power. Joan's freedom of thought seems to be the threat that she poses to the mighty structures of catholic Christendom.

Throughout the play, Joan demonstrates that the inner voices that speak to her outrank all other authority. She has an extraordinary faithfulness to reason that seems to win the reader to her side. Joan's major successes in the play including her defeat of the English, her coronation of King Charles and her successful reversal of the wind's direction in River Loire are quite significant. The audience is not only made to throw its lot behind Joan but also to understand that Shaw is an advocate of individual judgement or conscience as opposed to constituted or conventional authority.

Shaw is a disciple of reason and a hater of idealism and unnecessary loyalty to convention. The ideological conflicts in *Major Barbara* and *Saint Joan* are intended to open the audience's eyes towards practical realism and to close them towards illogical idealism. Some critics are of the opinion that the execution scene at the end of the play is an indication of Joan's failure and the failure of her most cherished voices of "reason" and "individualism". This, in my opinion, is a myopic

interpretation of the play because, although Joan is burnt, her ideas remain. In the execution scene, the executioner reports that Joan's execution is complete and all the rest of her remains are at the bottom of the river but confesses that Joan's heart would not burn. Later, when John de Stogumber fails to recognise Joan because he feels Joan is burnt and dead for good, the Executioner appears mentioning that Joan is more alive than De Stogumber himself. This is because Joan's heart would not burn and her spirit is up and alive everywhere. The heart that would not burn suggests that Joan's ideas will never die though she is physically dead. The Executioner later confirms that she is more alive and everywhere.

The fact that her spirit is up and alive may represent victory for Joan and her ideas. This assumption of victory is further supported in the epilogue where the main characters confess their parts in the execution of the saint. Dunois assures Joan that he kept to her words to make sure that the English are gone. Among other things, he tells her that the French forces won by fighting according to Joan's strategies and he is sorry that he did not come to her defence to prevent the priest from burning her. The fact that Joan's strategies remain the most successful in warfare suggests the victory of her ideas. Also, the idea that even popes are also found in hell, as the dead soldier from hell testifies in the epilogue, is testimony to the fallibility of the church authorities in religious matters – a view put forward by Joan and which leads to her being burnt. This suggests that Joan is right and not the church. In a similar way, Warwick appears to congratulate Joan on her rehabilitation and, among other things, explains to Joan that burning was nothing personal but only a "purely political necessity" [6]. If the above interpretations are correct, then the epilogue is, in a sense, a reinstatement of Joan's victory over the church; the triumph of Protestantism over Roman Catholicism. In the epilogue, Joan refers to her opponents thus, "they were as honest a lot of poor fools as ever burned their betters" [6].

## 5. Conclusion

The study has proven that, like Ibsen, Shaw castigates conventional religion for subjecting man's individuality to the will of the church. As illustrated in this article, conventional religious institutions stand on the way of individual effort and impede society's progress and development. The individualism of both Ibsen and Shaw works for the benefit of the society and not for the individual alone. By empowering Joan to challenge the religious institution in *Saint Joan*, Shaw seems to say like Ibsen in *An Enemy of the People* that the majority is weaker than the individual or better still, that individual effort yields more fruits than institutional norms that no longer help humanity. Shaw's religion is one that depends on money and not on poverty like the conventional religion of Barbara in *Major Barbara*. That notwithstanding, it must be made clear that Ibsen and Shaw are not like some of the nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers advocating the complete eradication of religious beliefs. Rather, both writers intend to

correct the aspects of conventional religion that hinder human progress and individual fulfillment.

In another sense, Ibsen, like Shaw, wants to wipe out the incessant hypocrisy that has eaten deep into the fabrics of traditional religion. His satire on religious hypocrisy seems to be a call on the leaders of conventional religion that they should always think of their vocational call and be of exemplary character. By presenting the hypocritical practices of his clerical figures in a cynical and ironical manner, Ibsen is indirectly questioning the validity of conventional Christian religion. The playwright seems to say that conventional religion needs to be reformed if it must ameliorate the daily conditions of human life. Mrs. Alving outrightly tells Pastor Manders that his preaching and all what he stands for are "artificial and dead". Nora, on her part, tells Helmer that she is beginning to learn for herself and that she is no longer ready to take what her husband tells her as Gospel truth.

Both writers portray a high determination to delete the inferiority which Christian religion and society has forced on the woman. Their plays seem to intimate that a woman possesses talents that are beneficial to the society as much as the man does. Shaw's religious philosophy emphasises that economic security must precede morality; that the body must be fed before the soul can contemplate higher things. Some critics have insisted that the real victory in *Major Barbara* goes to Undershaft; that materialism conquers spiritualism. This assumption misleads such critics into thinking that Shaw's intention is a complete eradication of the religion that Barbara stands for.

The study has examined the practice of conventional religion and how it hinders man's progress. The discussion has unveiled the hypocritical and corrupt nature of the clergymen in the plays of Ibsen and Shaw and how such hypocrites and the institutions they represent hinder individual effort and the progress of society. In spite of their satire on conventional religion, the playwrights do not seek a complete eradication of conventional religious practices. Rather, they attempt to synthesise the contradictory views on human nature on the one hand and religion and science on the other. In doing this, Shavian drama offers an alternative religion which he refers to as the religion of the "Life Force". It was indeed clear to Ibsen and Shaw that man cannot do without religion, yet religion in its traditional or conventional form was unacceptable. Both authors castigate fruitless religious creeds that impede human progress and insist on a more practical and true-to-life religion that permits society to progress. The authors understand that civilisation cannot continue to take its inspiration from traditional religion. According to them, a more enlightened religion has something to do with evolution and would, in some way, be creative.

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